In The Claims:

1. (currently amended) An isolated polynucleotide ~~as set forth in~~ comprising the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO:1 encoding a γ-butyrobetaine hydroxylase.

2. (currently amended) An isolated recombinant vector comprising the ~~gene~~ polynucleotide of claim 1.

3. (currently amended) ~~The isolated recombinant vector according to claim 2, which has accession number KCCM-10557~~ An isolated transformant transformed with the recombinant vector of claim 2.

4. (currently amended) ~~An isolated transformed with a recombinant vector comprising the gene of claim 1~~ The isolated transformant according to claim 3, wherein said transformant is *Escherichia coli.*

5. (currently amended) The isolated transformant according to claim 4, ~~which~~ wherein said transformant is *Escherichia coli* DH5α CJ2004 having accession number KCCM-10557.

6. (canceled)

7. (currently amended) ~~A method of preparing L-carnitine, which comprises hydroxylating γ-butyrobetaine using the γ-butyrobetaine hydroxylase from a transformant transformed with a recombinant vector comprising a gene is selected from the group consisting of a polynucleotide as set forth in SEQ ID NO. 1 or a polynucleotide encoding a γ-butyrobetaine hydroxylase as set forth in SEQ ID NO.2~~
A method of preparing L-carnitine, comprising:
a)   cultivating the transformant of claim 3 in a culture medium;
b)   obtaining a protein crude extract comprising γ-butyrobetaine hydroxylase from the culture medium;
c)   incubating said protein crude extract and γ-butyrobetaine in a reaction buffer;

and

d)   collecting L-carnitine from the reaction buffer.

8. (previously presented) The method of preparing L-carnitine according to claim 6, wherein the transformant is Escherichia coli.

9. (currently amended) The method of preparing L-carnitine according to claim 6, wherein the ~~recombinant vector has~~ transformant is *Escherichia coli* DH5α CJ2004 having accession number KCCM-10557.